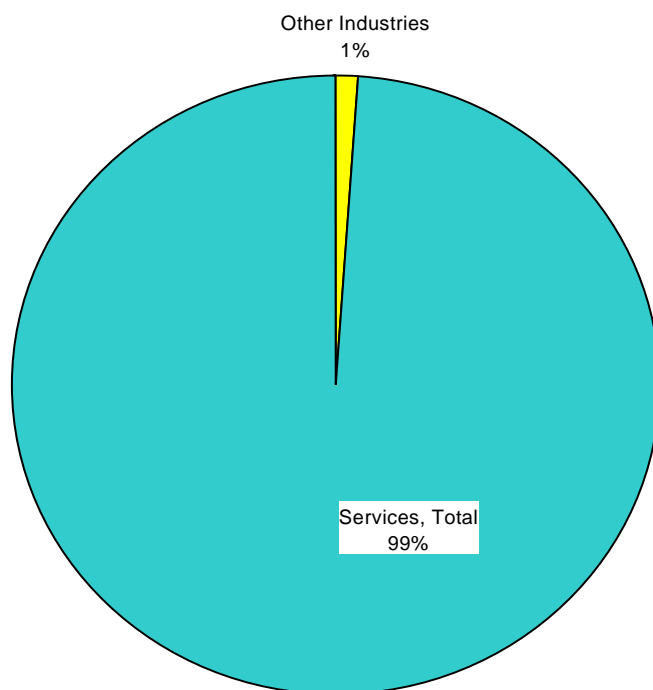


Job Description

Dental hygienists remove soft and hard deposits from teeth, teach patients how to practice good oral hygiene, and provide other preventive dental care. Hygienists examine patients' teeth and gums, recording the presence of diseases or abnormalities. They remove calculus, stains, and plaque from teeth; take and develop dental x-rays; and apply cavity-preventive agents such as fluorides and pit and fissure sealants. In some States, hygienists administer anesthetics; place and carve filling materials, temporary fillings, and periodontal dressings; remove sutures; perform root-planing as a periodontal therapy; and smooth and polish metal restorations. Although hygienists may not diagnose diseases, they can prepare clinical and laboratory diagnostic tests for the dentist to interpret.

Dental hygienists also help patients develop and maintain good oral health. For example, they may explain the relationship between diet and oral health, or even the link between oral health and such serious conditions as heart disease and strokes. They also inform patients how to select toothbrushes and show them how to brush and floss their teeth. Dental hygienists use hand and rotary instruments and ultrasonics to clean and polish teeth, x-ray machines to take dental pictures, syringes with needles to administer local anesthetics, and models of teeth to explain oral hygiene.

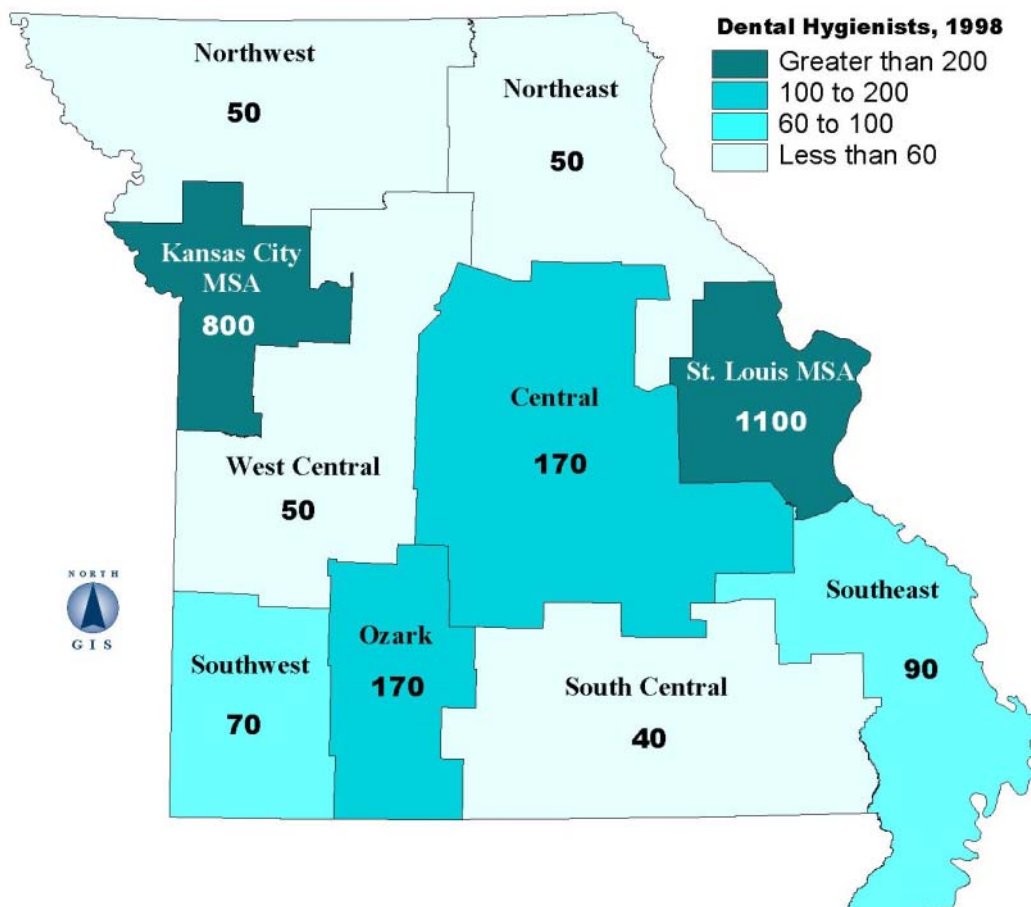
Employment by Industry



Employment Trends

Region	Employment		Projected Growth	Percent Change	Average Annual Openings
	1998	2008			
United States	143,000	201,000	58,000	40.3%	90,000
Missouri	2,010	2,610	600	29.9%	110
Northwest Region	50	60	10	20.0%	2
Northeast Region	50	60	10	20.0%	2
Kansas City MSA	800	940	140	17.5%	33
West Central Region	50	50	0	0.0%	2
Central Region	170	220	50	29.4%	9
St. Louis MSA	1,100	1,380	270	25.5%	54
Southwest Region	70	100	30	42.9%	4
Ozark Region	170	240	70	41.2%	11
South Central Region	40	50	10	25.0%	2
Southeast Region	90	110	20	22.2%	4

Source: Missouri Economic Research & Information Center, Projections Unit



Wage Information

Region	Average Hourly Wage	Average Annual Wage
United States	\$24.68	\$51,334
Missouri	\$26.71	\$55,557
Northwest Region	\$23.98	\$49,878
Northeast Region	N/A	N/A
Kansas City MSA	\$25.85	\$53,768
West Central Region	N/A	N/A
Central Region	\$26.76	\$55,661
St. Louis MSA	\$26.10	\$54,288
Southwest Region	\$20.24	\$42,099
Ozark Region	\$16.63	\$34,590
South Central Region	N/A	N/A
Southeast Region	N/A	N/A

Dental Hygienists in Missouri make \$55,557 per year, about \$4,000 more than the national average. Because of the small numbers of hygienists in some rural areas of the state, not all regions have wage data for this occupation.

Source: Missouri Economic Research & Information Center, Occupational Employment Statistics Unit

Typical Tasks

- Cleans calcareous deposits, accretions, and stains from teeth.
- Applies fluorides and other cavity preventing agents to arrest dental decay.
- Provides clinical services and health education to improve and maintain oral health of school children.
- Conducts dental health clinics for community groups.
- Removes excess cement from coronal surfaces of teeth.
- Charts conditions of decay and disease for treatment by dentist.
- Places and removes rubber dams, matrices, and temporary restorations.
- Examines gums to locate periodontal recessed gums and signs of gum disease.
- Feels lymph nodes to detect tenderness that could indicate oral cancer.

- Feels and visually examines gums for sores and signs of disease.
- Places, carves, and finishes amalgam restorations.
- Makes impressions for study casts.
- Removes sutures and dressings.
- Exposes and develops x-ray film.
- Administers local anesthetic agents.

Skills Needed

- Reading Comprehension
- Problem Identification
- Speaking
- Science
- Information Organization
- Judgment and Decision Making
- Equipment Selection
- Critical Thinking
- Active Listening
- Operation and Control

Preparation and Licensing Requirements

Necessary Education

- Associates Degree
(2+ years at college or university) or
- Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene
(BS/DH)
(4 years at Dental School)

Licensing

This occupation requires a license in Missouri. The Missouri Dental Board gives the licensing examination to candidates who have graduated from the appropriate programs and have passed the National Board examination. Passage of the Missouri licensing exam is required to practice in the state.

Job Outlook

- Dental hygienists are projected to be one of the 30 fastest growing occupations in the United States.
- Population growth and greater retention of natural teeth will stimulate demand for dental hygienists.
- Opportunities for part-time work and flexible schedules are common.

Employment of dental hygienists is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations, in response to increasing demand for dental care and the greater substitution of the services of hygienists for those previously performed by dentists. Job prospects are expected to remain very good unless there is a much larger pool of qualified applicants.

Population growth and greater retention of natural teeth will stimulate demand for dental hygienists. Older dentists, who are less likely to employ dental hygienists, will leave and be replaced by recent graduates, who are more likely to do so. In addition, as dentists' workloads increase, they are expected to hire more hygienists to perform preventive dental care such as cleaning, so they may devote their own time to more profitable procedures.

For More Information

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*Other Sources: United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Missouri CHOICES, O*Net*